JOURNAL OF APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS 1998, **31,** 503–508 NUMBER 3 (FALL 1998)

A BROAD PERSPECTIVE TO GUIDE BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS: REVIEW OF STAATS' BEHAVIOR AND PERSONALITY: PSYCHOLOGICAL BEHAVIORISM

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Most behavior analysts will agree with Staats that

> Psychology has been conducted as a cottage industry, with every problem area, every method, every theory (large and small) developed as an independent element. The various fields of psychology are conducted as autonomous sciences, with little interaction. This produces rival methods, theories, philosophies, and numberless unrelated findings. The product is a chaos, without general meaning and direction, and with faddishness, lack of consensuality, and randomness—the features that make philosophers characterize psychology as a "would-be science" (Toulmin, 1972). (p. 384)

Not only does psychology's "cottage industry" approach lead to chaos, it fails to achieve consistent progress in building a body of useful principles (cf. Hawkins, 1997a). Even a cursory inspection of introductory psychology texts reveals that psychology has not only failed to arrive at consensus about a paradigm for studying our subject matter but it has not even agreed on what its subject matter is (cf. Skinner, 1988). Staats calls for unity and suggests how unity or integrity can be achieved, using a behavioral approach. This should appeal to behavior analysts, because many of us see our goal as reinventing psychology as an integrated natural science.

ASPECTS THAT WILL APPEAL TO MANY BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS

Besides agreeing with Staats' goal, behavior analysts should find much else to agree with.

Comprehensiveness of Framework

Staats provides an unusually comprehensive framework or skeleton of behavior theory on which to hang any good scientific findings. Credible findings from any perspective can be included, as long as they can be conceived in behavioral terms. When they are fit into his framework, they will relate logically to principles from other parts of the framework, becoming part of an integrated, consistent, and behavioral science. Such a science would advance in a more consistent and rapid fashion than does present-day psychology, and it would be much easier to teach and learn. Because of the consistency of his paradigm, Staats called his approach "paradigmatic behaviorism" (cf. Staats, 1986) before adopting the present name, "psychological behaviorism."

If, as some of us wish, behavior analysis is to gradually replace or change all of psychology, behavior analysis must be far more comprehensive than it is at present, but progress toward comprehensiveness seems slow. Perhaps we have taken a too thorough-

Staats, A.W. (1996). *Behavior and personality: Psychological behaviorism.* New York: Springer.

The same authors reviewed this book recently for *Child and Family Behavior Therapy,* although the content of the two reviews is substantially different.

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ly inductive approach to the development of our science, so that we have insufficient direction. Staats attempts to provide an outline that can guide us, and it should stimulate research in areas we have neglected.

Observations About Cognitive Psychology

Staats criticizes cognitive psychology—especially as found in cognitive behavior therapy—in ways with which we can agree, saying that it "is like the discipline of psychology, a confusion of separate elements of knowledge" (p. 9), adding that it

> simply gives license to psychologists to infer cognitive processes in whatever behavioral phenomena that are studied. But the result is an "approach" that consists of an amorphous body of multitudes of unrelated concepts, principles, theories, findings, fields, and areas of study, with no program for creating compact, consensual, organized, parsimonious science. (p. 10)

Thus, cognitive behavior therapy "is at the present time, eclectic and mixed up" (p. 305).

Importance Given to Prior Learning

Using the concept of "basic behavioral repertoires," Staats points out that new learning is affected by the already-existing environment–behavior relations (to use a term from Donahoe & Palmer, 1994), the person's basic behavioral repertoires. Staats' position is "that *basic behavioral repertoires (BBRs) are learned that make a human being out of a human organism*" (p. 157, italics in original). He also provides a cogent analysis of why these basic environment–behavior relations persist, as his calling them one's "personality" generally implies (see p. 191). Perhaps because behavior analysis has relied primarily on research with naive lower animals for its basic theory, we have sorely neglected these hierarchical and cumulative relations (Freeman & Lattal, 1992), as has most of psychology. Thus Staats puts more of the person into the person–environment interaction, something that can make behaviorism appealing to a wider audience and help us take the effects of past learning into account more adequately.

As Staats points out, even in developmental psychology, where the effects of earlier learning on subsequent learning should be of major interest, such effects are largely neglected. Instead, developmentalists usually attribute such effects to various hypothetical, fictional constructs like "understanding," "memory," and "mind" (Schlinger, 1995).

An understanding of how prior learning influences subsequent learning would be very valuable to clinical behavior analysts. As Staats says, "the field of abnormal psychology must systematically research the learning that produces abnormal behavior. But, although it is generally acknowledged that learning plays a role in various behavior disorders, there has been no study of such learning" (p. 302), by which he means no study of the cumulative hierarchical accrual of environment–behavior relations that lead eventually to healthy or unhealthy behaviors. Clinicians who deal with such difficult behaviors as the lack of empathy in persons who commit sadistic crimes or the difficulty some children have in bonding with new parents should recognize the potential in such research. Also, if we understood the cumulative hierarchical learning involved in delinquency, we might be better prepared to arrange well-targeted new learning experiences for delinquent youth, a group that even behavior analysts have not been very successful in treating (Kazdin, 1987; Wolf, Braukmann, & Ramp, 1987). Perhaps the earlier learning experiences of such youths are too potent to be overcome by the modest learning experiences that we can arrange within accepted financial and ethical limits.

Chapter 4 introduces the experimental-

longitudinal method, a form of developmental research that would help in investigating hierarchical cumulative relations and thus the study of human behavioral development. It consists of working intensively (e.g., daily) with one or a few subjects over truly long periods, such as years, systematically presenting certain learning experiences hundreds of times while recording both the stimulus input and the subject's behavior. Often the best subjects would be one's own children. This method is similar to others' work with apes, usually involving development of language. It seems a needed counterbalance to the typical brief, highly analogue studies of human subjects.

Openness to All Good Research Results

Staats' framework does not ignore or reject research findings from nonbehavioral paradigms, as behavior analysis and much of psychology often do. A study's methods and results are evaluated independently of the concepts used and, if sound, are integrated into Staats' framework. This is more efficient for the growth of our science than rejecting or ignoring good scientific findings.

As clinical behavior analysts, we think that Staats' position could be a place for cognitive-behavioral and behavior-analytic clinicians to find consensus. Although his position is behavioral, it includes the kinds of environment–behavior relations that have been called cognition and emotion, and it is designed to cover much complex human behavior that behavior analysis has thus far neglected. He rather effectively avoids the use of hypothetical constructs to explain behavior. For example, his analysis of causation at temporal distance—a problem that often spawns hypothetical constructs as explanations—seems very credible.

Attention to Emotional Behaviors

Staats makes extensive use of emotional responses in his analyses, an area neglected by behavior analysis (Hawkins, 1997b). In fact, some may conclude that he gives emotion too much attention, because he believes that every one of the thousands of reinforcers and punishers we receive daily have their effect *because* of their emotion-eliciting power. Although that particular hypothesis seems unproven, it deserves study.

ASPECTS THAT ARE UNAPPEALING TO MANY BEHAVIOR ANALYSTS

Staats' framework is very useful and inclusive, but many behavior analysts will find two aspects of this book problematic: certain conceptual issues and some problematic emphases.

Conceptual Issues

The potential conceptual problems involve his specific treatment of emotion, his perspective on intelligence, his use of the concept of basic behavioral repertoires, and his position regarding biological versus environmental influences on behavior.

Emotion. Staats is not always clear in treating emotions as responses. Sometimes his description sounds like a layperson's view of an emotion: a complex but unitary event that *happens to* the person and is neither clearly behavior nor environment (e.g., p. 51). Of course the solution is not obvious, because we can sense many of our own responses, so that one response can function as stimulus (environment) for another response; but Staats' presentation could be clearer.

As mentioned earlier, Staats suggests that the reinforcing or punishing effect of a stimulus is due to its eliciting of emotion. Staats considers the emotional response involved in reinforcement and punishment to be a "central" one (p. 44), not the more obvious peripheral changes (e.g., heart rate, vasoconstriction, etc.; Staats & Eifert, 1990). This

qualification is necessary because most of the mundane reinforcers we receive daily elicit no detected emotional reaction. For example, the reinforcer of a dial tone when one picks up a telephone receiver is not accompanied by noticeable peripheral changes that indicate an emotional reaction.

This notion of a central, typically undetected emotional response becomes problematic when Staats suggests (p. 224) that a person's report of "interest" in some activity or object specified in a test item is a report of his or her emotional response to that activity or object. Yet any report of interest—a verbal response—is influenced by numerous variables, and it seems unlikely that a subtle, private (which "central" implies) set of responses would exert primary influence on that verbal response. Thus it seems unlikely that a person's report of interest is a valid index of an emotional reaction.

Intelligence. Staats appears to accept the notion of intelligence (chap. 6) as some kind of inner quality. It would be more consistent with a natural science perspective to use the word *intelligent* only as an adjective describing the effectiveness of certain behaviors that our society classifies as intellectual, largely because of their correlation with school performance. The fact that some ways of responding are more intelligent (effective) than other ways need not imply that there is an inner entity of intelligence.

Basic behavioral repertoires. The concept of BBRs could be more appealing with certain changes. First, it seems possible to speak of them in ways that do not suggest a hypothetical construct. Second and relatedly, it seems better not to refer to BBRs as one's "personality," although we agree that some of them are what people mean when they use the term *personality.* Third, BBRs should probably be seen as more varied than Staats seems to imply, in terms of the specific environment–behavior relations involved from one person to the next. Fourth, we suspect that the individual environment–behavior relations involved should be viewed as more malleable than Staats implies, although their malleability would probably depend on the strength and number of other environment–behavior relations supporting their continuation. Fifth, we question the notion that there could be a "full battery of tests with which to measure the individual's personality" (p. 207); it suggests that such tests hold more promise than seems justified.

Biological versus environmental causation. Like most behaviorists, Staats takes an environmentalist position regarding the causes of behaviors. This position has the advantage of encouraging persistent, vigorous efforts to devise environmental manipulations to change behavior; however, many behavior analysts will disagree with Staats' opinion that autism may well have no biological basis (p. 276) and dyslexia (severe difficulty learning to read) never has such a basis (p. 262).

Negative reinforcement. Finally, Staats uses the term *negative reinforcement* where behavior analysts today use the term *punishment.* This would not be a problem if he explained that difference in usage.

Emphases

We found three problems with Staats' emphases: his prevalent criticism of behavior analysis, his concern with who gets credit for what, and his emphasis on respondent relations.

Criticism of behavior analysis. Although many behavior analysts would agree with Staats' goal of an integrated science (e.g., Hawkins, 1997a) and with most of his theorizing, he engages in such unrelenting criticism of behavior analysis that many behavior analysts will have difficulty giving his perspective a fair hearing. Although he may have reason to be defensive (see Plaud, 1995), he often sounds as rejectionistic of behavior analysis as he accuses behavior analysts of being regarding other approaches.

This is counterproductive when his goal is to integrate the behaviorisms and psychology in general. It would have been more productive to acknowledge, incorporate, and build upon the remarkable and wide-ranging successes that behavior analysis has had. We recommend that a reader search tolerantly for what is valid in Staats' points and ignore the fault finding and the occasional misrepresentation of behavior-analytic thought.

One criticism that Staats levels at behavior analysts is that they do not accept concepts from other paradigms until they are translated into "behaviorese." This seems a particularly ill-fitting comment from a scientist who is arguing for a unified behavioral psychology. It is not possible to have a unified paradigm without insisting that concepts adopted from a different paradigm be translated into the language of the adopting paradigm. We believe Staats should encourage such translation, because that is the only way that behaviorists can take advantage of the numerous useful findings that arise out of other paradigms.

Concern about who gets credit. Throughout the book a reader will find that behavior-analytic findings and concepts are often soft pedaled, but chapter 6 provides a particularly striking example. Staats' interesting and informative history of the development of behavioral assessment emphasizes his own contributions and ignores those of behavior analysts enough to seem unbalanced.

Emphasis on respondent relations. Staats seems to give more emphasis to respondent relations than to operant relations. Although behavior analysis is guilty of the opposite, we would prefer to see greater acknowledgment of the importance of consequences.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR READERS

We highly recommend this book to behavior analysts (and others) with an interest in theory or theory construction. Much is new or modified from Staats' prior works, such as his framework theory of abnormal behavior (chap. 7). The breadth and the many provocative ideas should be useful to both basic and applied behavior analysts.

If one were to use this book for teaching graduate students and could not assign the whole book, probably the most important chapters would be the first three to five. They give Staats' overall conception completely enough for the student to understand its essence. Chapter 4 could even be omitted from that assignment.

Some readers may find Staats' approach too close to a hypothetical-deductive one, but it seems well worthwhile to propose a skeleton on which flesh needs to be added as a way of pointing the direction for future research, theory, and even practice. Staats has done this well, and we hope it does provoke much development, especially in areas previously neglected by behavior analysis.

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Received January 20, 1998
Final acceptance March 5, 1998
Action Editor, David P. Wacker